

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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Barbara Michals

Musical 'Joseph' has it all together

Performances of the Birmingham Theatre production of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" continue through Sunday, June 8. For ticket information, call 644-3533.

By Barbara Michals
special writer

"Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" is a bubbly, bouncy musical whose good spirits fairly leap from the stage of the Birmingham Theatre.

The cast is top-notch; the direction flawless, and the music, the first successful collaboration by composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyricist Tim Rice, upbeat and whimsical.

Setting the Old Testament story of Joseph entirely to music, the show has no spoken dialogue. The songs are as varied in style as the colors in Joseph's coat, ranging from country ("One More Angel in Heaven") to rock 'n' roll ("Song of the King") to calypso ("Benjamin Calypso") to French torch ("Those Canaan Days").

The youngest and favorite son of his aged father Jacob, Joseph (Don Goodspeed) is a dreamer. He inflames the natural jealousies of his 11 older brothers by predicting that his life will have a special significance and someday they will all be bowing to him. The brothers retaliate by selling Joseph into slavery.

WHILE IN servitude in Egypt, Joseph is imprisoned for catching the roving eye of the prime minister's wife. Still believing in his special destiny, Joseph never despairs.

Called upon to interpret the Pharaoh's troubling dreams, Joseph's special insight saves Egypt from years of famine, and he is exalted to high rank. Dreams can come true if you believe hard enough, Joseph declares in "Any Dream Will Do."

Goodspeed sparkles as Joseph. His good looks, engaging smile and strong voice are combined with charming innocence.

Mark McGrath is fine as the troubled Pharaoh, decked out in a gold lame jumpsuit and long sideburns a la Elvis the King. Dressed in a vest and pin-stripes, James Harms is amusing as Potiphar, the prime minister who made a financial killing investing in pyramids.

Carol Dille is the vivacious narrator, a musical guide through the story. A swollen jaw from dental problems did not stem her ebullience last weekend or hamper her agreeable voice.

The chorus of 11 brothers is excellent, achieving sharp group enunciation of the lyrics and still projecting lots of individualized personality. Stephen Kane as Levi, David Dollase as Ruben and Timothy Fawell as Naphtali get a chance to shine as lead singers.

EDWARD STONE'S choreography is as good as his direction. The show moves at an exhilarating pace right through to the curtain calls.

Barbara Michals teaches high school English and journalism in Southfield. A theater critic for the last 12 years, she is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

Actors return in roles that made them popular

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

Two young actors whose careers started in different counties, but both playing Shakespeare, have ended up with ties to the same Broadway musical show, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat."

Tall, curly-blond-haired, handsome and well-built — these are all adjectives that describe leading man Don Goodspeed, who is originally from Nova Scotia. He first played Joseph in the third national company of "Joseph."

Fat was once the word that came to mind for Timothy Fawell, born and raised in New York City, who appeared as one of Joseph's brothers, Naphtali, on Broadway.

Goodspeed and Fawell are repeating their roles in a new production of "Joseph" at the Birmingham Theatre. Besides a slightly different approach to the show taken by the current director, Edward Stone, the changes include Fawell's appearance. The now-attractive performer is a slimmed-down version of his former self.

FAT WAS where it was at for Fawell, who explained in a backstage interview last week that producers



Timothy Fawell again plays Joseph's brother Naphtali.

of the Broadway "Joseph" used to send him food after each show. At that time, "I had an approximately size 40 waist," he recalled, and the producers wanted to keep it that way.

Fawell earlier had decided to lose weight during the run of "Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?" in which he played a near-show-stopping role, when it played the Birmingham Theatre back in 1981.

"My weight was 339 pounds. I started losing during 'Patent' here. I really had performed most of the fat roles I was interested in, at the ripe old age of 21. I got down to 170 pounds while doing 'Patent' in Birmingham."

When he got back to New York, he was called to audition for "Joseph." The thinner Fawell arrived and was told, "Oh, Tim, we really wanted someone fat." So he put back the pounds again.

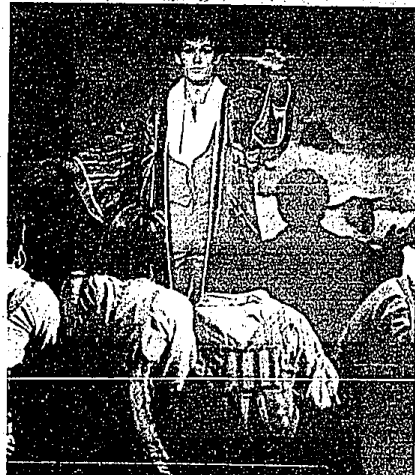
After appearing on Broadway in 1982-83, he did several companies of "Joseph" including a hand-picked company of some of the show's stars, at the Papermill Playhouse in New Jersey.

FAUVELL HAS also appeared in national touring companies of "Grease" and "Jesus Christ Superstar." The image of the character Nicely-Nicely (borne out by the song, "Sit Down, You're Rockin' the Boat," from "Guys and Dolls"), whom he played on a tour of the Poconos is no longer with us, however.

He started his weight-loss program all over again. When he was asked to play the role of Naphtali in the current production of "Joseph," he was also asked, "If I was willing to wear a fat suit or gain weight, I said no."

Fawell got his first real break in the theater at the age of 16, after winning a national Young Actors of America competition. He was chosen for Joe Papp's Shakespearean company to play Starveling, "the wall," during the show's 1969-70 season in the Midsummer Night's Dream.

"I played that same role at Stratford," declared Don Goodspeed, who was interviewed along with Fawell



GARY CASKEY/staff photographer

Don Goodspeed, who played Joseph in a national touring company of the musical "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," is onstage at the Birmingham Theatre in the lead role of the Biblical character.

In Goodspeed's star dressing room at the Birmingham Theatre,

While still in high school in Canada, Goodspeed auditioned for his first professional show at the Neptune Theatre. His name was passed on by an associate of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival and he got a call from Robin Phillips.

"I LEFT in February of my last

year of high school," Goodspeed said.

My teacher said, "He's going to do Shakespeare!"

He did two seasons at Stratford, around 1977-78. "I got to do great things, to work with incredible people, just watch and learn."

Goodspeed did more clashing at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. "I

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'Desk Set' speeds up in efficient production

Performances of the Troy Players production of "The Desk Set" continue through Saturday, May 17, at the Troy Community Center. For ticket information, call 879-1285 anytime.

By Manon Melgaard
special writer

"Desk Set" by William Marchant, current production of the Troy Players, is a delightful comedy that evokes the good old days of the mid-1950s until an efficiency expert arrives on the scene.

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